

15.(New) A method of autonegotiating communication configuration information through a plurality of communication devices with a shared autonegotiation controller, the method comprising:

prior to initiating autonegotiation for a first of the plurality of communication devices, ceasing network communication to cause the first of the plurality of communication devices to recognize a link_fail condition;

autonegotiating the first of the plurality of communication devices;

determining whether a second of the plurality of communication devices changed status during autonegotiation of the first of the plurality of communication devices; and

autonegotiating the second of the plurality of communication devices without ceasing network communication with the second of the plurality of communication devices if the status of the second of the plurality of network communication devices did not change during autonegotiation of the first of the plurality of network communication devices.

16.(New) The method of claim 15 wherein the step of ceasing network inactivity comprises ceasing network communication for an interval corresponding to break_link_timer.

17.(New) The method of claim 16 wherein the duration of break_link_timer comprises an interval between approximately 1200 milliseconds and approximately 1500 milliseconds.

18.(New) A method of sequentially autonegotiating a plural number of ports with a shared autonegotiation controller, the method comprising:

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